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25 March 1957

USAF Declass/Release Instructions On File

MEMORANDUM FOR : Headquarters, USAF
AFGIG-5
Attention: Lt. Col. Leo P. Geary

SUBJECT : Inadvertent Overflight - Mission [REDACTED]

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1. As you are aware, Mission [REDACTED] was dispatched as an [REDACTED] particularly focused on that area east of the Caspian Sea and additionally covering the Caucasus where our knowledge [REDACTED] is sketchy. We have an interest in probing this border region for soft spots in the hope of finding a point where penetration could be accomplished with the least chance of detection by Russian radar, should we get permission to resume our overflight program.

2. In laying on and dispatching this mission, this headquarters had no intent to cross into denied territory but rather to fly an outbound leg from Adana to Afghanistan area, well south of the Russian border and return flying a number of legs closely paralleling the Russian border on the way back to the Black Sea. The mission plan was dispatched from this headquarters to our detachment at Adana to be conducted generally as presented but with a certain degree of latitude left to the unit commander in determining the turning point over Afghanistan and detailed courses to make good on the return leg to base. Our SOP for such missions has been for the pilots to augment and check their deadreckoning navigation with sextant precomputed celestial observations. From our experience in operational overflights, and during the USCM at the training site, our pilots have been able to stay within 15 miles of a designated track through the use of precomputed celestial shots and deadreckoning.

3. In this instance where inadvertent overflight occurred, the error can be traced to two bad practices. First, this headquarters in laying on the return leg of the mission from Afghanistan did not leave sufficient cushion between the proposed track and denied territory boundary to allow for navigational errors which occurred. Second, our unit which dispatched the mission precomputed celestial shots for the mission but failed to precompute shots for an alternate flight plan which called for a turning point 200 miles short of the desired turning point. The pilot turned over the alternate point because he could see overcast conditions ahead. By so doing he failed to have precomputed celestial shots which would have enabled him to check his position on the return leg. Accordingly, lacking the benefit of celestial checks on his return, he overextended one leg which placed him in denied territory.

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4. The following steps have been taken to minimize the chance of similar inadvertent overflights in the future.

a. Flight plan under VFR conditions where deadreckoning can be well utilized will never place our aircraft closer than 25 miles from any point of denied territory. When extended periods of undercast are anticipated, the flight path will be planned to come no closer than 50 miles to denied territory.

b. Precomputed celestial shots will be prepared for the basic mission and all alternate courses of such flight plan so that the pilot under all conditions will have some means of checking his position through celestial means.

5. We do not anticipate the need for similar missions in the near future since all equipment functioned in a satisfactory manner on this mission and the desired intelligence was obtained.

SIGNED
R. M. HISSELL, JR.

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